CNDDB Newsletter

Biogeographic Data Branch　　　　　　　**December 2008**
Department of Fish and Game

Dear Friends,

This is the seventh edition of a periodic newsletter letting you know of important updates and changes in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB).

Please feel free to share this email with your staff or with others who didn't receive it. If you have colleagues who would like to receive this, just let us know by emailing BDB@dfg.ca.gov to update our list of recipients; note that this is a slightly different email address than you may have used previously. If you are not interested, just delete the email. You may also access this newsletter, and previous CNDDB newsletters, on our website at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/.

December 2008 NEWS from the CNDDB

1. *Price Increase for Subscribers*
   - The current economic crisis affects everyone and the CNDDB is no exception. We have found it necessary to raise our subscription price from $300/year for a new subscription to $600, and renewals will rise from $200/year to $400. The new prices ($600/$400) apply to all renewals or new subscriptions after January 1, 2009.
   - Despite this subscription price increase, the cost of the CNDDB has fallen through the years while the quality and quantity of the data have increased. In 1987 an annual subscription was $6,000/year for paper reports and map overlays, or $3,000/year for the data on ½ inch magnetic tape, and there was no GIS component. In 1992 we offered an annual subscription to our software program, *RareFind*, for the reduced price of $2,500 for commercial clients and $1,250 for government clients. In about 2000 we reduced the price again to the $300/$200 level. While the subscription price has not changed for the past nine years, during this time we have upgraded *RareFind* twice, we have made the GIS spatial data available with a "CNDDB project," we have made the CNDDB layer available to subscribers in BIOS over the Internet (see more BIOS information below), and we have made data updates available monthly from our website. In 1987 we had fewer than 20,000 occurrences in the CNDDB; we now have over 60,000 occurrences.

2. *CNDDB and Spotted Owl Layer in BIOS – Online access to GIS data*
   - Subscribers have access to an online ArcIMS map viewer with information for both the CNDDB and the Spotted Owl as well as several hundred other digital data layers. This Internet tool is known as "BIOS" (Biogeographic Information and Observation System). Although it works in any browser, it is optimized for Internet Explorer.
   - CNDDB in BIOS is accessible from: http://bios.dfg.ca.gov/ using this button CNDDB/Spotted Owl Viewer . The login needed is the same monthly login that subscribers use to access CNDDB data updates minus the full email address portion as in this example: cnddb_com for BIOS vs. cnddb_com@dfg.ca.gov for data updates.
   - The viewer is very simple to use. A tutorial is available here: http://bios.dfg.ca.gov/tutorials/tutorial_cnddb_in_bios.pdf .
   - Many CNDDB subscribers have requested access to the USFWS's Critical Habitat layers; these are available in BIOS along with many other useful layers.
   - CNDDB in BIOS is a quick way to view CNDDB records, examine other GIS data in the BIOS library, and to make maps. We encourage you to use this tool in your work.
   - Your feedback is important to us. Please email us at BDB@dfg.ca.gov with your comments after trying the new viewer.

3. *eRareFind, iRareFind or RareFind 4?*
   - *RareFind* is evolving once again. You may know that *RareFind* started out as a program in DOS, migrated to Windows, and then went through several Windows versions. The next generation of *RareFind* will be an Internet application with no requirement to install any program on individual computers or to update your text data. Instead, we will refresh the CNDDB data on our server once/month on the first Tuesday of the month. For GIS users: Note that you will still have to update your ArcGIS/ArcView GIS data once/month as you did before by downloading it from our secure website.
   - The name for this new version is not yet decided. If you prefer one of the three names above in the title, or if you would like to suggest another name, please contact Roxanne Bittman at: rbittman@dfg.ca.gov.
   - The updated *RareFind* will contain enhanced capabilities including direct connectivity with BIOS (allowing the user to quickly view the GIS data in BIOS after querying on the text in RareFind). Other enhancements include the ability to query on date ranges, elevation ranges, last updated date, and text searches in the "comments" field for each occurrence.
   - In addition, query results are easily exported to Microsoft Excel. We have created the usual canned reports as well.
   - DFG users have access to *iRareFind* now; just login to the DFG Data Portal using your username (your email address) and Novell password and click on CNDDB, Query.
   - Subscribers will be given access very soon; please stay tuned.

4. CNDDB sensitive data – under reconstruction
- There have always been some element occurrences in the CNDDB that were flagged as "extra sensitive" usually because of over-collection pressures or landowner sensitivity. There is a field in the CNDDB called "Sensitive" which can be marked either yes or no.
- The CNDDB sensitive EO's have their location data suppressed for commercial users (those with login: cnddb_com). For commercial users, the only geographic information provided for sensitive occurrences are the USGS quad and county. Up until recently, the graphic component of the CNDDB for sensitives consisted of a separate layer containing **quad-sized features** indicating which quads contained one or more sensitive occurrences. The text data was also modified, with all reference to the specific locality suppressed.
- <3% of all EOs are CNDDB sensitive.
- You should not ignore the sensitive EO's!! These are some of our rarest species including prairie falcons, endangered herps, and carnivorous plants. The CNDDB sent out a survey of customer usage of the sensitive occurrences and we learned that most commercial users were ignoring them.
- Since November 2008, the CNDDB has attempted to address the problem of lack of attention to the sensitive occurrences. We are now including them as quad-sized features in the regular CNDDB layer. We are currently evaluating this approach and additional modifications may occur.

5. *Submitting data to the CNDDB*
- Detailed information on the best ways to submit data to the CNDDB can be found on our website:
  http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/submitting_data_to_cnddb.asp
- Some data submitters may find that it is easier to submit a digital table of data rather than filling out individual field survey forms. Researchers with scientific collecting permits may find this particularly helpful. The CNDDB does NOT require field survey forms for every occurrence. If your rare species data currently are housed in a database or Microsoft Excel table, you may simply submit that data in its native form. The same goes for shapefiles you have created. Just make sure we can decipher your field names and that all necessary fields are included. For spatial data, be sure to include the datum used.
- What are the "necessary fields?" The minimum fields would include the usual "who, what, when and where." Additional fields of great use to the CNDDB include population size, either estimated or counted, site condition, occurrence rank estimate (A-D), associated habitat, associated species, and for animals, the type of occurrence/observation: roost, nest, burrow, breeding area, rookery, wintering site, and the type of behavior at the site (nesting, foraging, perching, etc.).